

Message Text

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ORIGIN EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SIG-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY VALLETTA PRIORITY
INFO USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 102878

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MT

SUBJECT: FELICE VISIT

1. SUMMARY: DR. FELICE MET WITH UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM ON APRIL 20. HE MADE A STRONG APPEAL FOR U.S. AID IN CONJUNCTION WITH AID FROM THE EUROPEANS, STRESSING THAT THE ITALIANS, GERMANS AND OTHERS HAD TOLD MALTA THEY COULD NOT HELP UNLESS THE U.S. DOES SO. MR. NEWSOM INFORMED HIM THERE IS LITTLE CHANCE FOR U.S. AID, BUT WE WOULD CONTINUE TO URGE THE EUROPEANS TO BE RESPONSIVE TO MALTA'S NEEDS AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO LOOK FAVORABLY ON U.S. INVESTMENT TO MALTA. END SUMMARY.

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2. BOTH THE UNDER SECRETARY AND DEPTOFFS GAVE DR. FELICE VERY WARM WELCOMES AND INFORMED HIM THAT AMBASSADOR LAINGEN HAD URGED US TO RECEIVE HIM WELL AND WE WERE BEING RESPONSIVE TO AMBASSADOR LAINGEN'S REQUESTS.

3. FELICE BEGAN BY STATING THAT ALTHOUGH HE IS A MEMBER OF THE MALTESE OPPOSITION AND VERY PRO-NATO, HE AGREES

WITH MINTOFF'S NEUTRALITY POLICY. MINTOFF IS DEMANDING FROM THE WEST -- "AND RIGHTFULLY" -- 17 MILLION MALTESE POUNDS PER YEAR FOR FIVE YEARS AFTER MARCH 1979. AFTER THAT, MALTA WOULD BE "ON ITS OWN." THE EUROPEANS

HAVE TOLD MALTA THAT THEY ARE WILLING TO HELP, BUT CANNOT PROVIDE ASSISTANCE UNLESS THE U.S. DOES SO. FORLANI HAS TOLD FELICE PERSONALLY THAT ITALY COULD NOT HELP UNLESS THE U.S. DOES. THE ITALIANS ARE COMMITTED TO HELP, THE GERMANS ARE CONSIDERING IT, THE FRENCH HAVE PROPOSED NOTHING SO FAR. THE ITALIANS ARE WILLING TO GIVE AID EQUAL IN AMOUNT TO THEIR SHARE OF THE NATO PAYMENT THEY HAVE BEEN MAKING.

4. FELICE ADDED THAT THE U.S. GIVES ASSISTANCE TO MANY COUNTRIES, INCLUDING SOME NOT SO FRIENDLY TO AMERICA. MALTA IS STRATEGICALLY VERY IMPORTANT "FROM A POSITIVE AND FROM A NEGATIVE POINT OF VIEW," SO THE U.S. SHOULD BE INVOLVED. IF THE U.S. DOES NOT HELP MALTA, THE ISLAND MIGHT "LOSE ITS EUROPEAN ATTACHMENTS" ALTHOUGH IT DOES NOT WANT TO. BUT "WE WON'T BLACKMAIL YOU." MALTA'S NEUTRALITY WILL BE REAL. THERE IS NO RUSSIAN EMBASSY IN MALTA, BUT THERE IS AN ISRAELI EMBASSY.

5. THE UNDER SECRETARY STATED THAT THE U.S. RESPECTS AND UNDERSTANDS MALTA'S POLICY OF NEUTRALITY. WE AGREE
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MALTA REMAINS IMPORTANT. BUT OUR ABILITY TO HELP WITH OFFICIAL AID IS VERY LIMITED. WE FEEL STRONGLY THAT THE PROBLEM IS A EUROPEAN ONE AND THAT RESPONSIBILITY BELONGS TO THE EUROPEAN POWERS. THE U.S. HAS MADE DIRECT APPROACHES TO THEM ON MALTA'S BEHALF. WE HAVE ENCOURAGED U.S. INVESTORS TO LOOK FAVORABLY ON MALTA -- WITH SUCCESS. INVESTMENT IN MALTA SEEMS TO BE TAKING UP THE SHORTFALL FROM THE BRITISH SUBSIDY. BUT THE USG HAS VERY LITTLE CONTROL OVER THE PRIVATE SECTOR, WHICH MAKES INVESTMENT DECISIONS ON THE BASIS OF THE FINANCIAL CLIMATE OF THE COUNTRIES UNDER CONSIDERATION.

6. MR. NEWSOM STRESSED THAT WE HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY IN GETTING ASSISTANCE FUNDS FROM CONGRESS. THESE FUNDS HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY TARGETED ON THE POOREST COUNTRIES AND WE HAVE LIMITED FLEXIBILITY FOR UNIQUE CASES. WE THINK MALTA SHOULD LOOK TO EUROPE, NOT BECAUSE WE DO NOT APPRECIATE THE ISLAND'S IMPORTANCE, BUT BECAUSE WE MUST JUDGE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IN TERMS OF ECONOMIC NEED. THE CHANCES FOR DIRECT U.S. ASSISTANCE ARE NOT GOOD, BUT WE WILL ENCOURAGE THE EUROPEANS TO HELP. DR. FELICE SUGGESTED THAT THE U.S. OBTAIN THE NEED FOR

CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL BY CHANNELLING FUNDS THROUGH ITALY. HE WAS TOLD FIRMLY THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT DOES NOT HAVE THIS KIND OF FLEXIBILITY.

7. DR. FELICE DELIVERED LETTER FROM MINTOFF TO PRESIDENT CARTER WHICH BEING CABLED SEPTTEL. CHRISTOPHER

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